

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 PM-04 MC-02 DODE-00 ACDA-07
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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9137
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 2322

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, MASS, BC, UK, US
SUBJECT: BOTSWANA PURCHASE OF AR-18 RIFLES

REF: LONDON 20150

1. IN THE COURSE OF A CALL DEC. 16 ON UK HIGH COMMISSIONER
ELEANOR EMERGY, SHE TOOK OCCASION TO REVIEW BACKGROUND ON GOB
REQUEST TO PURCHASE 400 AR-18 RIFLES AND APPROPRIATE AMMUNITION.

2. MS. EMERGY SAID IT WAS NOW MORE THAN THREE YEARS SINCE GOB
HAD APPROACHED HER WITH REQUEST TO PURCHASE RIFLES AND AMMO.
WITH EACH SUCCEEDING MONTH, THE SUBJECT HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY
EMBARRASSING IN UK-GOB RELATIONS. SHE TRACED THE SLOW, PAINFUL
PROCESS OF STUDYING THE REQUEST (DONE BY A BRITISH EX-COLONIAL
OFFICER WITH CLOSE TIES TO PRESIDENT KHAMA) AND WHICH CONCLUDED
THAT ARMS PURCHASE WAS ENTIRELY JUSTIFIED TO STRENGTHEN PARAMILITARY
UNITS. THERE FOLLOWED DISCUSSIONS ON TERMS OF PURCHASE, METHODS
OF SHIPMENT, ETC.

3. DESPITE PREPARATIONS, NOTHING HAS HAPPENED AND GOB OFFICIALS
HAVE INTENSIFIED PROBING AND QUESTIONING ABOUT WHEN THE SHIPMENT
WOULD BEGIN. QUESTION HAS NOW GIVEN WAY, MS. EMERY SAID,
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TO WHAT SHE TERMED "RESENTMENT AND SUSPICION" THAT UK IS
DELIBERATELY WITHHOLDING ARMS AS A POLICY DECISION. SHE STRONGLY
DENIED THAT WAS OR HAD BEEN THE CASE BUT NOTED THAT THIS IDEA
HAD TAKEN ROOT IN SOME GOB QUARTERS AND HAD BEEN ECHOED WITHIN

THE LAST SEVERAL WEEKS BY PROMINENT GOB OFFICIALS. DELAY IN

SHIPMENT HAS NOW REACHED THE POINT, SHE SAID, WHERE "UK MOTIVES WERE QUESTIONED" IN A WAY THAT "AFFECTS COOPERATION IN OTHER AREAS". MS. EMERY ASKED THAT I HELP CLARIFY UK POSITION WITH GOB NOTING THAT CONFUSION ALSO APPARENTLY CAUSED DELAY IN USG APPROVAL OF NECESSARY EXPORT LICENSES. FINALLY, SHE ASKED THAT U.S. AUTHORITY TO SHIP AMMO BE EXPEDITED SO THAT PART OF THE SHIPMENT CAN OCCUR BEFORE CHRISTMAS AS NOW SCHEDULED.

NORLAND

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Message Attributes

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